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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Identical letters dated 14 January 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am writing in order to draw your attention to the latest terrorist attacks perpetrated against the citizens of Israel.

Today, 14 January 2004, at approximately 9.30 a.m. (local time) a female suicide bomber, and 22-year-old mother of two, perpetrated an attack at the Erez Crossing in the Gaza Strip, killing 4 Israeli citizens and wounding 12 others, including several Palestinians. The Erez Crossing serves as one of the primary entry points for thousands of Palestinians who cross the border to work in Israel. An attack at this junction serves as a direct affront to Israel's concerted humanitarian efforts to allow Palestinians to enter the Crossing, despite ongoing terrorism in the region. It serves as further evidence that Palestinian terrorist groups, which continue to operate, are not only committing horrific acts of brutality, but are enemies, both of the peace process and of the interests of the Palestinian people themselves.

Hamas and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, the latter affiliated with Yasser Arafat's own Fatah movement, jointly claimed responsibility for the bombing. Vowing to escalate attacks, Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin said it used a woman suicide bomber in order to exploit Israeli security procedures, calling the tactic a "new development in resistance against the enemy." In spite of the expressed obligations to fight terrorism and dismantle the terror infrastructure, Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia declined to condemn the attack.

Yesterday, 13 January 2004, at approximately 7.30 p.m. (local time) terrorists opened fire on a car, killing Ro'i Arbel, 29, near his home in Talmon. Arbel was a father of five, including triplets born three months ago. Three other passengers were also wounded with moderate injuries when the vehicle was ambushed. The Fatah Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades later claimed responsibility for the attack.

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On 25 December 2003, at approximately 6.30 p.m. (local time) a suicide bomber perpetrated an attack during the busy evening rush hour at the Geha Junction, east of Tel Aviv, near Petah Tikva. The terrorist attack killed four Israeli citizens, Adva Fisher, 20, of Kfar Sava; Noam Leibowitz, 22, of Elkana; Angelina Shcherov, 19, of Kfar Sava; and Rotem Weinberger, 19, of Kfar Sava; and wounded over 20 others. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, headquartered in Damascus, Syria, and operating from Palestinian Authority-controlled territory, claimed responsibility for the bombing.

As this recent and most brutal wave of terrorism indicates, the ongoing refusal of the Palestinian Authority to take the strategic decision to dismantle terrorist organizations, as it is legally and morally obliged to do, continues to ravage the lives of innocent civilians and endanger efforts to build a new reality for the people of the region.

Israel calls upon the international community to reaffirm its absolute rejection of terrorist tactics, and to accept nothing less than the complete dismantling of terrorist organizations, and relentless efforts to prevent terrorism and bring its perpetrators and supporters to justice, in accordance with international law, the Road Map, signed agreements between the parties, and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1373 (2001).

At a time when so much focus has been placed within the United Nations system including during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly on the appropriateness of certain defensive counter-terrorism measures, it is high time that more attention and clear condemnation is addressed at the brutal terrorism that makes such measures necessary. It appears that the Palestinian leadership will continue to violate its most basic legal obligations and support crimes directed against innocent civilians until the international community makes clear, in word and in deed, its fundamental opposition to this bankrupt strategy.

I submit this letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000, which document the criminal terrorist strategy for which the terrorists and their supporters must be held fully accountable.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 156 and 37, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Arye **Mekel**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.